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ABSTRACT

A policy statement on 1989 public policy agenda by the Council of State Representatives of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) is presented. Eight issues were examined, with three being the primary areas for emphasis. They are: (1) educational opportunity and achievement (with such directives as advocating federal legislation consistent with the Higher Education Act and stimulating federal and state interest in new supplemental programs to reduce the student loan debt); (2) higher education finance and policy (with directives like advocating a permanent extension in the tax code of tax-free tuition benefits for employees who enroll in college-level courses and advocating funding at the state level to institutions that sufficiently reflects affordable low tuition levels at public colleges and universities); and (3) community and economic development (with such directives as advocating federal and state funding for things like long-term reciprocal student and faculty exchange programs, inservice education, and area studies and advocating voluntary national public service legislation that does not supplant existing student financial assistance programs). AASCU advocates policies that reallocate, realign, or reconfigure programs and funding and propose new funding for high priority programs. (SM)

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1989 Public Policy Agenda

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"An education is an investment in people. The return on that investment is real and substantial."

—Terrel A. Bell

1989 Public Policy Agenda

The following statement was presented by the Council of State Representatives of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities and adopted by the association membership at its 28th annual meeting in November 1988.

The modern, comprehensive state colleges and universities composing the American Association State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) share common roots and characteristics. With more than 370 member institutions enrolling 2.5 million students, AASCU institutions now bring higher educational opportunity to one of every five students in American higher education. AASCU institutions annually graduate:

- one-third of our nation's bachelor's degree recipients
- more than one-quarter of its master's degree recipients
- 6 percent of all doctorates, and
- more than one-half of America's teachers.

Access to higher education has been expanded by AASCU institutions in their pursuit of a national goal reported by President Truman's Commission on Higher Education in 1947—that of "free and universal access to education, in terms of the interest, ability, and need of the student." In 1985, the AASCU board established a commission to reexamine the role of comprehensive public colleges and universities in service to the nation and to chart a new course into the next century. This National Commission on the Role and Future of State Colleges and Universities, led by former Secretary of the

U.S. Department of Education, Dr. Terrel H. Bell, reported its findings in 1986; AASCU institutions accepted the challenge and responded in 1987 with exemplary programs demonstrating implementation of the commission's findings.

Underpinning the Bell commission report is the premise that "all education is an investment in people and that the return on the investment is real and substantial." A fundamental objective for AASCU in fulfilling its role is to support increased investment in, and efficient and effective use of, funds received by higher education. To increase the investment and make the dividends widely available, AASCU must promote a clear and visible partnership between educational practices and public policies. AASCU's 1989 Public Policy Agenda illustrates this partnership.

The overall policy direction of AASCU receives in-depth review every three years by the association's board of directors. In 1988, this review by the AASCU board resulted in eight issues of focus, i.e. association goals for 1989-92. Three issues—educational opportunity and achievement, higher education policy and finance, and economic and community development—emerged as the primary areas for emphasis.

AASCU members elect a Council of State Representatives, which serves as the association's principal public policy body. The council annually develops and submits to the membership a specific Public Policy Agenda of federal and state legislative policy issues derived from the board's policy direction. Once the membership approves the agenda, the council—working with the staff of the Office of Governmental Relations—assumes the leading role in guiding its implementation.

The Council of State Representatives has identified and developed public policy priorities for 1989 derived from the board's policy direction and centered around the three central issues of educational opportunity and achievement, higher education policy and finance, and economic and community development. In addi-

tion, the AASCU membership approved a board recommendation to create three new programmatic centers within the association offices to sustain momentum in the implementation of these three areas of priority and to provide a sharper and more visible focus for them.

Federal and state budget restrictions make it difficult to expect funding for new programs or sizable increases in raising budget allocations. Recognizing these constraints, AASCU will earnestly advocate policies that reallocate, realign, or reconfigure existing programs and funding as well as propose new funding for high-priority programs that benefit students of AASCU institutions.

Educational Opportunity and Achievement

Issues selected to enhance educational opportunity and achievement encompass, but are not limited to, communicating AASCU institutions' purposes to the media, policy makers, and organizations; providing policy analyses on student aid issues and promoting balanced financial support to encourage greater participation by disadvantaged students underrepresented in college enrollments; opposing significant shifts in federal and state funding allocations; implementing the recommendations of the National Commission on the Role and Future of State Colleges and Universities; and supporting proposals to increase or reallocate funding that may benefit AASCU students and institutions.

Priority Directives for 1989

- Advocate federal legislation consistent with the Higher Education Act to provide direct assistance to students—especially, to encourage disadvantaged students to complete high school and to pursue a college education
- Advocate federal and state legislation that recognizes the diverse student mix of full-time and part-time enrollments in AASCU institu-

tions and extends student financial assistance on a full-parity basis to part-time students

•Advocate federal legislation that shifts the current imbalance of student financial aid funding away from a reliance on loans during a student's first year in college; consider policy changes that could better provide aid in the form of grants and work-study funds during the first year; and explore proposals to restrict the award of first-year guaranteed student loans by phasing loans in as needed after students become academically established

•Stimulate federal and state interest in new, supplemental programs to reduce the student loan debt burden, and improve measures to prevent student loan default

•Stimulate federal and state interest in creating new programs that will provide incentives for parents and families to save for their children's education, but will not diminish the state's responsibility to provide support public colleges and universities that provide affordable education to its citizenry

•Support and strengthen existing teaching, research, and service programs at public colleges and universities for minority students and non-native-speaking citizens, and target funding for programs that increase the participation of disabled and minority students

•Advocate increased funding and technical support for our nation's historically black public colleges and universities

•Advocate increased funding and technical support for public colleges and universities with large numbers of Hispanic students

•Advocate increased funding for and stimulate federal, state, and local interest in student special services (TRIO) programs aimed at reaching junior and senior high school students who do not aspire to higher education, who have been discouraged from attending because of misinformation about college costs or lack of financial assistance, or who need developmental skills services while attending public colleges and universities to attain the required level of achievement

•Advocate new federal funding for meeting the authorized levels contained in the recently enacted National Science Foundation Authorization Act of 1988, especially for the Academic Research Facilities Modernization Program and strengthening of the undergraduate and graduate science and engineering curricula

•Advocate increased funding for developing institutions through Title III of the Higher Education Act, and stimulate federal interest in restructuring the program to allow for a more equitable mix of funding between two-year and four-year institutions

Other Directives

•Cooperate with the military in expanding educational opportunities for men and women in the armed services through tuition assistance programs and the Montgomery GI Bill

•Strengthen federal and state support of public education at all levels, with a special emphasis on programs that add to the supply of teachers and enhance teaching and learning effectiveness

•Advocate federal and state funding incentives for programs that demonstrate cooperation and collaboration between school systems and higher education, especially in the area of teacher education reform

•Advocate a broadening of eligibility within the National Science Foundation supporting undergraduate research programs to allow higher numbers of faculty working at AASCU institutions to compete for funding

Higher Education Finance and Policy

Priorities and activities selected to enhance higher education policy and finance encompass, but are not limited to, analyzing and communicating trends and issues affecting the financing of state assisted public institutions; advocating public responsibility for the support of educa-

tion; seeking alternate ways to funding public higher education; promoting effective use of funds and assessing how to ensure academic quality and cost effectiveness in public colleges and universities in the states; supporting provisions of the tax code that act as incentives to AASCU students and institutions; and assisting state legislative and executive staffs, and other associations engaged in the study of state higher education issues, especially in issues relating to the critical mix of state and federal funding of public colleges and universities.

Priority Directives for 1989

•Advocate funding at the state level to institutions that sufficiently reflects affordable low tuition levels at public colleges and universities, which is especially important in achieving institutional accessibility and ensuring measurable effectiveness of the "low tuition principle" in reducing or eliminating cost barriers to public higher education

•Advocate a reexamination of tax code barriers affecting municipal bonds and other tax-exempt financing that act as disincentives to the financing of construction and renovation projects at AASCU institutions

•Resist any further erosion of tax code benefits for students, such as current exemptions from employment taxes and tuition amounts of scholarships and fellowships, and advocate an end to taxation of scholarships and fellowships for foreign students attending U.S. universities

•Advocate a permanent extension in the tax code of tax-free tuition benefits for employees who enroll in college-level undergraduate and graduate courses under the employee education assistance program

•Advocate a policy within proposed changes to the federal unrelated business income tax law that does not disadvantage state institutions in their need to meet the demands of their unique student population or to engage in other necessary income-producing activities

•Advocate federal and state funding to assist AASCU institutions in constructing, reno-

vating, or improving undergraduate science and engineering instructional facilities and in upgrading or replacing obsolete equipment

•Stimulate federal and state interest in funding academic facilities to contain and reverse the consequences of deferred maintenance and to prepare for new enrollment increases expected in the next decade

•Assist and support efforts to ensure academic quality and cost effectiveness in public colleges and universities and to recognize and foster institutional accountability

Other Directives

•Document and promote the importance of higher education to the health, vitality, and well-being of the states by expanding the public investment in public colleges and universities

•Help the diverse constituencies of public colleges and universities recognize the vital importance of institutional autonomy and the critical link of that autonomy to the development and preservation of quality public higher education, recognizing that there is no single best governance or coordinating structure that works for every state

•Advocate the use of state funding formulas that are not solely FTE-based and that recognize the growth in the number of part-time students at public colleges and universities

•Cooperate with and advocate the direct involvement of AASCU members in the agenda and policy-setting process of major state-based and regional associations that have an impact on state colleges and universities, namely the National Governors' Association, the Education Commission of the States, the National Conference of State Legislatures, and the State Higher Education Executive Officers

•Identify new and innovative ways of generating voluntary support for public higher education from external sources—alumni, grants and foundations, and cooperative agreements with business and industry

•Stimulate interest in activities that help state policy makers recognize the change in the

traditional constituencies and roles of public college and universities, and encourage more flexible policies and creative financial incentives to better meet the changing needs of the states and regions

•Support and strengthen the public colleges' and universities' role in campus-based student outcomes assessment to demonstrate accountability to state governments that contributes in positive ways to statewide or systemwide student assessment mandates.

•Reaffirm the central role of public colleges and universities in serving state and local governments as they address critical problems and issues

Community and Economic Development

Priorities and activities selected to enhance economic and community development encompass, but are not limited, to helping public colleges and universities identify, plan, implement, and evaluate processes to address and help solve local, regional, state, and national economic problems; helping identify specific and central roles for AASCU institutions by developing guidelines and models for economic and community development; promoting a vital link with community colleges; devising a plan for funding and promoting the educational preparation of displaced persons in the community so, that they can make a positive contribution to the economic development of local, regional, state, and national goals.

Priority Directives for 1989

•Advocate voluntary national public service legislation that does not supplant existing student financial assistance programs, and oppose mandatory national public service as a condition for student financial assistance

•Advocate federal and state funding for long-term, reciprocal student and faculty exchange

programs, inservice education, staff development, area studies, foreign language instruction, and economic development opportunities abroad

Other Directives

•Advocate federal and state interest in providing incentives that encourage high school and college students to engage in public-service careers and community service

•Stimulate interest in federal, state, regional, and local economic development, using partnership programs directly initiated by or involving public colleges and universities and partners from business, industry, and government

•Continue and enhance funding from the Economic Development Administration to support programs that will harness creative talents contributed by academic and business partners, and fund these developmental efforts in a manner that focuses on small business development and utilization of the most appropriate public colleges and universities

•Change state regulations to make it easier for public colleges and universities to attract and perform economic development functions and remove unnecessary obstacles preventing their broad-based community involvement in economic development and the public sector

•Advocate incentives for business and industry to develop training programs that prepare employees for international trade and business

•Stimulate a federal and state interest in funding incentives for public colleges and universities so that they may assume a national leadership role in internationalizing the curricula across the university, and develop policies and practices that reflect the modern realities of global interdependence and competitiveness

•Advocate federal and state funding incentives to encourage joint ventures between AASCU institutions and multinational corporations and foreign institutions of higher learning

•Stimulate interest in and funding for active collaboration and cooperation among all sectors of the education and public-service communities in support of rural revitalization activities, such as economic development programs and the delivery of distance learning programs

•Advocate incentives for funding objectives of the urban public university to ensure the rigor of academic programs, to conduct basic and applied research, and to involve urban universities in the economic, cultural, and social lives of the cities AASCU institutions have accepted a public responsibility to provide citizens with an equal opportunity of access to a college education. With resources contributed by student, family, community, region, and state and federal governments, the nation has prospered. For all of us in public higher education, AASCU's Public Policy Agenda for 1989 is intended to guide our efforts so that we may continue to count on past contributions and attract new resources in addressing the goals we have set for ourselves.

To realize goals set by the National Commission on the Role and Future of State Colleges and Universities—such as expecting at least 35 percent of American adults to possess a college degree by the year 2001 and graduating one million additional public school teachers to meet the anticipated demand during the next decade—will take commitment, leadership, and resources. To recognize the rapidly changing composition of American's student population—of which more than 40 percent is over age 24 and which is projected to grow in the next decade to over 50 percent—will require new approaches, resources, and flexibility in the years ahead.

AASCU institutions have earned public trust as leaders in higher education. We have accepted the challenge to assume the primary public role in each of our respective states as centers of higher learning. AASCU's Public Policy Agenda for 1989 is the governing influence for us in fulfilling our role of stewardship.

The American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) is a leading higher education association that represents more than 370 public colleges and universities across the United States and in Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Virgin Islands.

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